

The Atonement

John Morgan

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THE ATONEMENT

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Chapter 1: A Moral World.

THIS is a moral world, under a moral government, because mankind are conscious of moral ideas and of moral law, and know themselves to be moral agents, subjects of free-will, of the power to obey, or disobey moral law.

Outside of the sphere of moral agency mankind are as much under the control of necessitative forces as brute animals or insentient matter. But within this sphere necessity can have no compulsive operation, however mighty the influences that act on the soul, whether those influences press from within through the working of the living organism, or from without through the action of other living beings or the action of material external nature. As moral law commands, there must be the power to obey, even if the heart of the moral agent is set in disobedience. In general, sceptical necessitarians admit the incompatibility of universal necessity with obligatory moral law. But many Christian philosophers, strenuously maintaining universal necessity, still hold to the validity, of moral obligation. The sceptics appear here to have the logical advantage; but the saintly character of many of the advocates of universal necessity is beyond question.

It would seem not to be easy to perceive how blameworthiness or praiseworthiness can attach to qualities called moral, when the subjects of these qualities no more freely produce them than the rose so produces its fragrance, the rainbow its beauty, or the serpent the poison of its fangs. We like a beautiful or beneficent thing, and we dislike an ugly or baneful thing, and we praise the one sort and dispraise the other; but this is a totally different operation of our minds from moral approbation or disapprobation.

The moral law commands only one thing--love, benevolence, good-will. This implies that the moral agent knows something of the value of well-being or good. Obedience to the moral law is holiness--the only holiness conceivable or possible. Obedience is in its very conception voluntary. It cannot be the product of creation, in the literal sense of the word. Creation gives existence to being and its natural attributes. But it may be

conceived that when man was ushered into being God at once so operated on him in a moral way as to secure in him, as his first character, obedience to the moral law, or holiness. Thus Man would be made, or induced to be, upright.

Refusal to love, or disobeying the moral law, is sin or unholiness. This may appear in various forms; but the essence of sin is found in not loving, or in not exercising good-will. No moral agent can be made the subject of holiness or sin without his consent. Neither holiness nor sin can be propagated from father to son, as scrofula may be. Disease, physical depravity in countless forms, may be immediately inherited, and of course without the consent of offspring. But these are not sin or sinful, however harmful. These may be the occasions of sin, but not without the consent of offspring. When sin or vice is said to be inherited, the word ought to be considered as employed in a secondary sense, unless the context forbids this interpretation. A whole family, tribe, nation, or race may thus inherit moral qualities; but the moral quality resides only in each individual moral will, and originates there. In no other possible way, can we conceive of moral responsibility as properly attaching to each individual moral agent. However powerful the principle of heredity, we must not give it an interpretation which will sweep away the moral world, or use it to explain the universal prevalence of sin in mankind in such a way as to annihilate the sin which it is sought to explain.

If an inworking of the Holy Spirit is an essential condition of the holiness of creatures, their holiness is still their own personal holiness, consisting of their own willing and doing. The occasion or condition makes no part of the thing. And when man first sinned, his sin was disobedience to the moral law. The sin was occasioned by temptation applied to the susceptibilities of his nature. These were not sinful nor evil in any sense. They were necessary constituents of his form of being, necessary to its activity. But moral creatures always know propensities are not to be indulged in opposition to moral law, but always governed in accordance with it.

All the susceptibilities or propensities, being essential to the nature which God has given to man, were transmitted to their posterity by the first parents of the act. I do not find that the Scriptures explicitly tell us

whether human nature was changed by the fall of Adam and Eve. But observation has determined that propensities may be made morbidly intense, or irregular, or both, by wrong indulgence, and thus changed may be transmitted to offspring. But this change does not constitute the propensities themselves sinful in any sinner. Sin consists in the surrender of the will to their control, in the consent of the man to obey them against the moral law. When offspring inherit them in this disordered state, it is an inheritance of increased temptation. But however strong the temptation may be, the propensities cannot govern without the consent of the tempted party, even if the temptation is aggravated by the wily influence of Satan. We do not yield to absurdity, when we believe that our first father has transmitted to us an inheritance of increased temptation, certain to lead us into sin. But to say, that a necessitative force infuses sin into us in connection with our descent, is to contradict the very nature of sin, which can be nothing else than disobedience to moral law, and so the free action of moral beings. The principle of heredity is one of tremendous influence, and recognized in the Scriptures; and it is seen to mould families; nations, and races in a marvelous manner. But it is never in the Scriptures spoken of as necessitative, or as fating any creature of God to be wicked. The Bible would be a very different book if it represented mankind as inheriting sin as they inherit scrofula, consumption, or leprosy.

Nor has the Bible any responsibility for the doctrine that when a moral creature has once sinned he is bound to sin by chains of necessity. For the moment necessity comes in morality and all moral action cease, and all moral responsibility, except for the past. It may be that a sinner, or every sinner in the world, has so set his heart to do evil that there is no hope of his turning from evil-doing unless a Divine Redeemer undertakes his deliverance; but all his obstinate sin is as free as if he were just beginning his evil course. The distinction between moral certainty and physical necessity must be held fast, or there comes a total collapse of all moral ideas.

The first man, by becoming a sinner, became the natural representative of the race in sin, as from him descends the nature or propensities which, with Satan's influence, successfully tempt mankind to sin. It is not Adam and Eve alone who, in the third chapter of Genesis and in the fifth of

Romans, are set forth as sinning, but the whole human race of moral agents. But nowhere in the Bible is the offspring of the first pair said to inherit in a purely passive way, their sinful moral character. The first sin of every human being is as free as the first sin of Eve and Adam. The disobedient attitude toward God and his law is as freely assumed. And no necessity of continuing in sin is caused by any sin of any sinner. All sin is always freely committed, and is the abusive product of free-agency. Guilt is proportioned to the degree of light enjoyed. If sinners have now more light than Adam had, they are, in committing sin or in continuing in it, greater sinners than he could be. The cigar-smoker, who knows better that it is wrong to smoke cigars than Adam knew that it was wrong to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, is a worse sinner than Adam was in his sin, This, of course, could not be, if man existed under the operation of a necessitating force of evil, inserted in his nature by his mere descent from the first sinner of the race, or it he did not remain, as to his faculty of moral will, as free as Adam was before he sinned.

But this freedom does not interfere with the certainty of the occurrence of sin. The first sin of Adam was beforehand as certain as any sin ever was or ever will be. God infallibly knew that it would occur, and occur freely, not even occasioned by any antecedent moral bias, but opposed by a bias to good; for an evil bias would itself be sinful, and obviously the first sin could not in any sense arise from what was itself sin. The only account the Bible gives of Adam's first sin is, that Eve tempted him, and he ate the forbidden fruit; his innocent propensities, including his affections, being presupposed as conditions of his temptability. This is the only explanation that can be given. Some so called philosophers imagine that it is an explanation to say that God created the sin; and they propose the same explanation for all sin and holiness, and, indeed, all thought and choice. The trouble is, that the explanation annihilates the sin sought to be explained. It is self-evident that any attempted explanation of sin or holiness that makes them or it a product of necessity, like an effect of a natural cause or natural causes, is inadmissible, as not germane to the subject.

I have said that all moral events, as well as events in the world of matter and necessity, are antecedently certain to God. This certainty is regarded by Christian necessitarians as proving the necessity of the events. On no

other principle, they argue, could they be certainly foreknown. To me the argument appears plausible; and I confess I know not where the fallacy lies. It is like the famous puzzles about motion in space and about the reality of time. Augustine said: "If you do not ask me about time, I know about it; but if you do ask me, I don't know." I think it is self-evident that necessity and morality are incompatible, and that the universality of necessity would sweep away responsibility and moral government or reduce them to an illusion. This is generally held with respect to the pantheistic philosophy and most pantheists maintain that the notions of moral merit and ill-desert are illusory. But I see no difference between the logical outcome of the necessitarianism of some Christians and that of Spinoza. Christian philosophers do not accept this logical outcome; but Spinoza boldly faced the music, or "horrible discord." Holding that there cannot be virtue or sin without free-will, I hold that free-will is a reality, and that we know its reality by immediate consciousness. Kant and Hamilton seem to maintain that we do not know our freedom immediately, but infer it from our consciousness of the moral law. This removes the idea of freedom from the domain of knowledge to that of faith.

As that freedom which is the condition of moral responsibility exists in all moral agents, and is not destroyed by sin, we are not to regard ourselves as a race of unfortunates who by the fall of their first father have been made sinful. We are really guilty ourselves, as he was of his own sin, of all the sin charged to us; and continuing in sin under the light of the gospel, we must be more guilty than Adam ever could be. In this way the Bible speaks of the wickedness of mankind, never representing the sin of any generation as any the less their own personal sin for any influence descending to them from Adam.

Chapter 2: The Story of Sin

Consciousness, observation, and Scripture unite in the recognition of the awful actual sinfulness of man. The picture which Scripture gives of man's moral character, aside from the influence of grace, is truly frightful. The moral depravity ascribed to him is total, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil continually." He is free from righteousness, and no good thing dwells in him. A large part of the Bible is occupied with the history of the wickedness of mankind, very different from the history of the prevalence of small-pox or cholera. We have the wickedness of the antediluvians set forth in terms of awful significance.

Then comes the wickedness of the Canaanites of Abraham's time, culminating in that of the inhabitants of the cities associated with Sodom, horribly infecting even the family Lot. Then follows the wickedness of the later Canaanites, heaping up its measure till it was full. The wickedness the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, and, indeed, of all the nations and races with which the family of Abraham had to do, moves before us. Neither Abraham nor Isaac thought that their children could safely intermarry, with them. The Abrahamic race itself presents a mournful spectacle of depravity, deceit, violence, murder, even fratricide, breaking out among them. And what a melancholy picture does the history of Israel exhibit in the different eras of their existence--in Egypt, in the wilderness, under the judges, under the kings, in their own land, and in the land of captivity! Finally, when the return from Babylon promised better things, how soon and how long did odious exhibitions of sin show themselves--a formalism and hypocrisy more odious than the old idolatry! The culmination of sin was reached in the rejection, persecution, and murder of the Son of God, and in the persistent resistance to his claims to the present day. All this was perpetrated under a supernatural system of appliances which ought to have made Israel a nation of exemplary saints--a glorious, transforming spectacle to all the other nations.

When we turn to the great Gentile nations and empires, we find them of such a character that they are fitly symbolized to the student of history under the figures of the most ferocious wild beasts, which succeed each other with no moral improvement; the last being the most ferocious and

destructive, stamping with his feet what he cannot destroy. The apostle Paul photographs the characters both of the Gentiles and of the Jews in lines, and colors which all history attests. The testimony of intelligent travellers and missionaries assures us that the heathen of the present generation are in moral character as hideous as the heathen of past ages.

This wickedness, thus darkening the historic page, is not to be excused on the plea of ignorance. God has never left himself without witness. "The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." They have known that "God gave them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts, with food and gladness." His law has stood written on their hearts; and the story of his supernatural interpositions has gone to all the world. Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Greece, Rome, have had the story told them, and might have known its full purport if they had desired the knowledge of God's ways. And what a wonderful comment upon the poisonous influence of a perverse heart that has given itself to sin, that the revelation of God to Israel had so little power over the souls of the chosen race! Even Josephus represents that the Jews of his time were the most wicked people on the face of the earth.

No doubt, in important respects civilization had a favorable influence; but civilization itself became the occasion of corruption. The Greek and Roman writers abound in testimonies to the great corruption that reigned in the most civilized and refined nations of the earth, and in the character of persons of the highest rank and influence. The Greek and Roman military power was used for the enslavement and robbery of the ruder nations. And the same wild scene of slaughter and pillage continues to the present day--the game of war still played by the nations on various pretenses. The support of armies has been the greatest burden of mankind, exhausting the productions of the field and factory, and even the wide ocean. The villanies of trade are countless. The adulteration of all articles of food, of wear, and of medicines, and often of the most dangerous character, abound on every side. Many live on the vices and miseries of their fellow-men, reducing innumerable women and children to starvation, selling to those who ought to feed them maddening and

murderous poisons. Large and often triumphant politied parties sustain these wretches in their villainous trade, and share with them the spoils, buying their nefarious votes with nefarious laws. In Great Britain and the United States probably more capital is engaged in this atrocious business than in any other. And these intelligent nations suffer this ruin to rage from generation to generation. And slavery and the slave-trade forced on us unspeakable horrors for hundreds of years. The unclean spirit, though cast out, still manifests his foul temper, not only where he reigned, but in vast numbers and regions long called free.

The treatment the gospel as received presents another aspect of human wickedness. The persecution and murder of the Son of God has been already spoken of. "He was in the world," writes the apostle John, "and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." As the apostles traversed the earth on their mission of mercy they were everywhere persecuted with murderous malice; and it is remarkable that the great Apostle to the Gentiles himself was, before his conversion, a great persecutor, and made havoc of the church.

After Christianity spread its conquests till the Roman empire became nominally Christian, Christianity became dreadfully corrupted, and the whole Orient where it prevailed so extensively is now overspread with a miserable formalism and a dead faith, where Mohammedism or some other alien religion has not utterly displaced it. To a vast extent the same corruption pervades Europe; and one America is almost wholly occupied by debasing superstition, and the other America, partly occupied by it, is seriously threatened with the same general spiritual bondage. A grievous unbelief, worse than these corruptions of Christianity, extensively prevails throughout the so-called Christian world. Romanism in France, Italy, Germany, and Spain is often a mere cover, and scarcely a cover, for some form of infidelity. And the same is the case with much of the Protestantism of Continental Europe, and even of Great Britain and of the United States.

Infidels often make their proud boast that Christianity, through their great

discoveries, is well-nigh obsolete. The history of the world proves abundantly that mankind, left to themselves, or supplied with all the reformatory means in operation before Christ, are likely to be forever the slaves of Satan, and need the mightiest divine interposition for their salvation from delusion and sin.

Chapter 3: Punishment of Sin

The Bible and all rational observation testify that wickedness is followed by misery, known to be punishment for sin. A sense of guilt and a fear of evil always follow wickedness. When God placed man in the world, and laid on him a command as a test of his loyalty, he said to him: "In the day thou transgressest thou shalt surely die." The words may be interpreted as a prediction, or a threat, or both. The result, as well as the nature of the case, is our best guide to the correct interpretation. It could not but be that sin would introduce into the soul intensive war, a sense of degradation, remorse, and fear.

Cain was a miserable, soul-harassed wretch,--a trembler, full of agitation, afraid that whoever met him would slay him, although his brothers. He hardly needed to be told that the voice of his brother's blood cried to God from the ground. He felt that he was accursed of God, though protected from violent death. The consequence of sin is not merely the disordering operation of sin on the inner man and its wasting influence on the body, working independently of the will of God or man by virtue of its own tormenting power. One of its consequences is the wrath of God on the sinner, pressing him every day. He is cursed when he lies down and when he rises up, when he sits in the house and when he walks in the way, and accursed in all the works of his hands and of his mind. A flaming sword turns every way to keep him from the tree of life. The ground is accursed for his sake, and he is driven out from his Heavenly Father's beautiful paradise. Mourning, lamentation, and woe fill the world.

The flood, the fire and brimstone that devoured Sodom and Gomorrah, the countless calamities visited upon man attest that the punishment of sin is not its mere natural working within the soul or on the body and the outward world. Positive punishment of sin is just as natural as any punishment at all; and the idea of a divine nemesis is universal to man, except where an artificial philosophy has perverted the spontaneous sentiments of the soul.

The natural apprehension of the sinner is that he is shut out from mercy; for he knows that he deserves eternal punishment as truly as he

deserves any punishment at all. Ill-desert, when once incurred, can never cease to be. Even George Eliot, in her *Daniel Deronda*, recognizes this. The degree of punishment incurred must of course depend on the degree of light in which the sin was committed. The state into which the sinner falls is a state of exposure to all the punishment which the wisdom and goodness of God must inflict, as well as the misery of that internal laceration which no will can control.

Chapter 4: Mercy

But it is plain that man was not doomed for his first sin, or for manifold sins, to eternal woe. In that case there would be no room for any gracious interposition. Of course, if the sin continued the curse remained, yet so that God, to gain if possible the sinner, made his sun to shine on him and his rain to descend for his benefit. A merciful promise was given to our first parents; Cain was spared; the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah; God bore long with the Amorites; he showed Pharaoh great mercy, and was not ready to destroy him or his people till the last effort of graciousness was tried: the Canaanites would all have been spared if they had humbled themselves as the Gibeonites did, who need no deceptive trick to secure grace from the God that made them.

All through the history of Israel and of the Gentiles, as they appear in the Bible, we find mercy alternating with judgment or intermingled with it. The threatenings of God, even when expressed without qualification, were found to mean that they would be executed unless there was repentance, as in the case of Nineveh. Jonah was right in his interpretation of the nature of God's comminations; and he was afraid he would lose his character as a prophet, because in case the Ninevites repented his denunciation would come to nought. God said to Jeremiah: "In what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." In Ezekiel the principle is extended to the individual: "When I say unto a wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, if he turn from his sin . . . none of his sins which he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him."

Everything shows that man was not brought by the representative sin of Adam into a hopeless condition. But there were some forms of evil to which, in general, the race was to be subjected, as disease, decay, and animal death, and the train of bereavement and sorrow connected with these evils such that, on account of the fear of them, men, till the hope of the gospel delivers them, are all their lifetime in bondage.

Prophecy, especially in the Apocalypse, speaks of the visible judgments on the nations under the reign of Christ, to whom his Father has committed all judgment, as quite as terrible as those inflicted on the old world. The imagery of the prophet of Patmos is fully as awful and impressive as that of the more ancient seers. The same may be said of the language of our Lord himself. The judgments on the old world are represented in the Now Testament as the punishment of the time of God's forbearance of the time when God relatively overlooked, winked at, the ill-desert of men.

In a large degree the punishments of Old Testament times are the visible judgments exhibited on the theatre of history for it was God's design to prepare thus a historical, matter-of-fact proof of his moral reign over the nations of the earth. This would prepare mankind to appreciate the revelations respecting the retributions of the unseen world. These were not brought into the bold relief they present in the New Testament revelation, though they were by no means unknown to ancient Israel, and are spoken of in the Book of Daniel as plainly as in the apostolic writings

Chapter 5: Object of Judgments and Mercies

When sin is perpetrated, it seems due to God's moral creatures that he should make manifest his views on the subject, demonstrate his abhorrence of the sinner, and counteract as far as possible his evil influence. Words are not enough for this end. Punishment seems the natural and necessary resort of him who is the moral Guardian of the universe. It plainly must be pushed to such an extent as to be an emphatic expression of the mind of God, to show that to him sin is an evil and bitter thing indeed. Hence the awful severity of God's punishments, often fitted to make the ears of all that heard of them tingle, and their hearts fail them for fear.

Prophetic records, whether in form denunciatory or historical, are adapted to produce that quailing of the soul that the prophets themselves mention as the natural effect of the judgments of God on evil-doers. And yet we are not to think of them as a full execution of retributive justice. They might have been, with no exceeding of the ill-desert of the sinner, pushed much farther. But they were pushed as far as infinite wisdom saw good for the best effect. What is the full ill-desert of sin is known only to God; and we know not that sin is ever punished in any world as much as it deserves to be. Objective penal justice is not an end; and God will urge its infliction no farther than benevolence requires.

If towards sinners. God had appeared in no other light than that of a punisher, though not in any instance putting forth all his wrath, there might have been a sadly false impression made respecting his character; it might have seemed unamiably stern. It was wise, then, for God to manifest himself as a God of mercy--as forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. That grand revelation of his mercy to Moses appears in all his ways in the history of the world.

Towards Israel and towards the Gentiles there was mercy, all along down the ages, ready for the penitent, sometimes unmixed with severities, at other times accompanied by such severities as served to keep alive a

sense of God's hatred of sin, of his remembering wrath in mercy as truly as mercy in wrath.

How wonderful the discipline and training through which mankind were carried by the various dispensations, the antediluvian, the patriarchal, the legal,--all tending to show how weak man is, and how much in need of the mightiest divine working in wisdom and love to rescue him from sin, to reconcile him to God, and to fit him to stand in the filial relation to his. Heavenly Father. There doubtless was, as has been said, a moral necessity, that God should give an emphatic expression, in act as well as word, to his sense of the evil of sin. Many hold that the law, both of nature and of revelation, contains a commination that must be executed, either on the sinner or a substitute. But no law ever did or could contemplate substitution in such a way that vicarious obedience and punishment should be regarded as a proper fulfillment of the precept and penalty of law.

Substitution is said to be resorted to sometimes in China; but this cannot be according to the provision of any law, but must be a contrivance of corrupt officials, substituting defenseless plebeians for rich criminals of rank. This view is supported by the fact that a son, recently substituted for a father at his own request, had to persuade the magistrates that he was the real criminal.

The precept of law is laid on every individual, and it is absurd to imagine that one can obey for another. The obligation of obedience extends to every, moral being in the universe. Nor is it possible that one moral being should be punished for another, and that thus the sinner himself should be legally exempted from just liability. No legislative authority ever could have enacted such a law. Each subject, on the other hand, is held to his personal, untransferable responsibility.

But does not such an interpretation of law as this preclude pardon? No: it never was the case except in the instance of the laws of the Medes and Persians, that pardon was made impossible by the published penalty of any law, unless it was expressly said that there would be no pardon. The promise of a law must be fulfilled, because the promises has an indefeasible interest in its fulfillment; but in every case when pardon may be exercised without detriment to the public good, pardon may be

legitimately granted, and sometimes it may be in the power of the government to remove obstacles standing in the way of pardon. On these principles governments have almost universally acted; and the scripture history shows that God has acted on the same principles, pardoning when he could wisely and benevolently do so. The same principles sometimes authorize a commutation of punishment, or punishments of less severity than the laws seem to prescribe. Indeed, every exercise of mercy rests on the same fundamental reason, including the forbearance or long-suffering so often spoken of in the Bible. But obviously the public good must in every case be paramount to private interest, and be guarded with the most scrupulous care. The idea that penal justice must, always be done, in the sense that the penalty of the law must always be inflicted, would exclude the possibility of pardon and of atonement. For the infliction of the penalty on a substitute would not be justice, but, if the substitute were innocent, manifest injustice, and his consent would not materially alter the case. If by justice be meant justice to the public good, this indeed must he always done, and no pardon or mercy inconsistent with this can be legitimate. I shall by-and-by speak of the governmental expedient for the legitimation of pardon, called atonement.

Not all who suffer when punishment is inflicted are punished. Near friends are smitten when a criminal is struck down, as when a criminal father or son or brother is executed. Infant children perished in the flood, and with the Sodomites. These were slain in mercy, not in wrath, as was also the case when the doomed Canaanites were destroyed. It may be difficult to explain all the cues; but we have no reason to doubt that the Abrahamic doctrine, that the Judge of all the earth must do right, is true. At present, when possible, the tares, for the sake of saving the wheat, are spared till the harvest; but the pious Elijah suffers with the people whom his own prayer has smitten with famine.

But there is often real responsibility when a superficial view does not recognize it. Had Israel been as zealous for the honor of God as was incumbent, Achan might not have committed his sin, and it is therefore charged on all Israel, and chastisement accordingly inflicted. But when the chief criminal was discovered, the weight of punishment fell on him. If Israel had been entirely innocent the anger of the Lord could not have been kindled against them. In some degree the crime was practically laid

to the charge of the whole.

In case murder is committed it is said to defile the land. Somehow it is an evidence that a brother's life is not so precious there that a murderer is wholly an unnatural product of the land. Till his crime has brought the community to such a hatred of the atrocity as is expressed in the solemn shedding of his blood, the land is unclean. His execution makes atonement, not for him, but for the land, and is an expression of the repentance of the people. Or if the previous guilt is not considered so great, the land is plainly held in duress, and, as it were, suspected, till they have shown by punishing the murderer that they have no voluntary part in his crime. So when any crime had been committed and the perpetrator was unknown, or when any one had ignorantly done anything forbidden by the law, there was supposed to be some possible lack of vigilance and care, and a solemn atonement was made on the part of those who might be suspected of this deficiency, though conceived to be guilty of no wilful violation of the divine law. God walked among the people as a holy, jealous God, not allowing his creatures to stand in any doubtful relation to his law and its violation.

Another instance of awful but most wise severity, is found in the visitation of the sins of the fathers on the children, recognized by our Lord in his declaration that all the righteous blood shed from the foundation of the world would be visited on that generation.

These passages, and others like them, have often been sadly misinterpreted. Onkelos long ago in his Targum gave the key to their meaning in the few words: "When the children imitate the iniquity of their fathers." They thus indorse it, and really make it their own, instead of considering, and refusing to do such like. Men are thus held responsible to profit morally by the history of the past, not to follow recklessly in the way of ancestors. The great French poet Racine, in his Athalie, has put into the mouth of Joad [Jehoiada] an indignant denial of the doctrine maintained by some.

Il ne reherche point, aveugle en sa colére,

Sur ce fils qui le craint l'impidété du père.

"God does not visit, in his anger wild,

The father's sin upon the pious child."

There are cases, not to be confounded with this, in which children are placed in less desirable circumstances, and even subjected to painful diseases in consequence of the sin of parents; as when leprosy was inflicted on Gehazi and descended to his children, or the priesthood was taken from the family of Eli. These evils were not punishments to the innocent children, but to the parents, yet disadvantages assigned by the All-wise Sovereign to the children as motives to parents for parental fidelity. The law of the descent both of advantages and disadvantages is one of great influence to the human soul, and is therefore maintained by God with great constancy. But punishment can descend only when the immoral character descends also. Punishment must, in the nature of things, be a purely personal matter, that cannot come, like leprosy or scrofula, by mere natural causation.

Extensive infliction of punishment is often avoided by human authorities by the punishment of the ringleaders in the case of an outbreak of iniquity--multitudes being spared the roughest brunt of suffering, though bearing the shame of crime. A course similar to this was pursued in the case of those who perished in the flood. They were the indorsers of the wickedness of all past generations of sinners, and were most justly made examples, after God's long-suffering gave them ample opportunity for repentance and mercy.

The Sodomites were the vilest sinners of the period and the region. They had long been the recipients of kindness, till the ill-fame of their vileness went up to heaven; and when God sent down to them an angel committee of inquiry they gave the angels abundant proof that the report did not exceed their enormous guilt; and the rain of fire and brimstone came down. Had ten righteous men been found there the city would have been spared. The solitary one was rescued. There were guilty cities that deserved to perish with Sodom and the other four; but they were spared.

We find mercy mingled with the chastisement of the guilty sons of Jacob. Though their sin found them out, and they suffered severely for it, they were not destroyed, but even blessed, while most of them deserved to

die as murderers.

When Israel sinned in the wilderness--almost all guilty--God did not destroy the whole of the guilty ones, but smote down the ringleaders, and made their doom a warning to the rest. When sentenced to die in the wilderness they had a space for repentance and for the admonition of the children.

The same course of merciful limitation of punishment characterized the way of God in the whole recorded history of Israel, and characterizes it still; so that we can easily accept Paul's declaration that "they, are beloved for the fathers' sakes." Nor are these co-minglings of mercies with judgments confined to Israel, or to sinners of the antediluvian period. They appear in the whole history of the world.

It is remarkable that when Daniel is telling us of the destruction of the great empires of antiquity he tells us that there was mercy for all but the last and most tyrannous. The wild beast representing this was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

But God, while he thus revealed his mercy, and showed that he forgives transgression and sin, was careful to provide that he should not be trifled with. So when Moses sinned he sentenced his beloved servant never to tread the land of promise, and would not bear his supplications for full forgiveness. He might behold the land, but might not enter it. How affecting the rebuke to Moses, and how solemn the lesson to Israel and to all the nations and all their generations! And when David sinned, though God did not reject him as he did Saul, how awful was the punishment inflicted--not in secret, but in the light of the sun. And the instrument of his punishment was his beautiful and beloved son Absalom, over whose deserved ruin and slaughter he wailed out that most pathetic outcry of a stricken father's heart, probably pierced through with the thought that his own sin had contributed to make Absalom the contemptible fool that he was.

Chapter 6: The Atonement

In the heathen world there were propitiatory rites. The serious heathen felt that to propitiate Deity it was not enough to repent of wrong done, or to confess it humbly. They sacrificed animals, and even their own children and other selected human victims, apparently as self-inflicted loss or suffering; hoping thereby to excite the pity of the offended gods. It is in allusion to this that Micah the prophet represents man as asking, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or bow, myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression--the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This is a natural and affecting expression of belief in an avenging God. It is very, different from a belief that there is no mercy needed, or none to be possibly obtained. The answer of the prophet is not to be considered as a denial of any need of atonement, but as declaring that if there is a humble use of the atonements provided by God, and doing justly, and loving mercy, and humble walking with him, all will be well.

The heathen really endeavored to make expiation for their offences against their deities by devoting costly offerings to their honor, and to appease or propitiate their supposed wrathful feelings by the sacrifice sometimes, at the demand of the priests, of their dearest--according to Tennyson's terrible poem, "The Victim." The sacrifice of Iphigenia may furnish an illustration. Sometimes the gods were imagined, in their rage, to send pestilence or famine or wide sweeping ruin upon armies and nations, in revenge for an offence to a priest or dishonor done to a temple; and the god must be appeased in this awful way, not merely by the reparation for the wrong.

The human victims were slain, it seems to me, as in great straits a victim is thrown to a herd of hungry wolves, to save the rest; or less odiously, a few of an offending family, army, or nation sacrificed to save the residue. I know of no case of a victim not connected with the offenders thus sacrificed; and never does the idea appear of vicarious punishment recognized as a full equivalent for the punishment of the offenders. There

was perhaps, a parallelism between the human sacrifices and the punishment of one or several of a company of mutineers, instead of the whole number.

There were sometimes sacrifices of quite another sort. Where a great deliverance or a great victory had been granted, so supposed, costly offerings were made in acknowledgment; rivers of oil and wine were poured out, thousands of animals slaughtered, and sometimes, as the crown of all, human victims slain. The case of Jephthah's daughter was perhaps, of this class. There was here no idea of atonement.

Much as there was revolting in the heathen propitiations they had a real origin in the sense of guilt in the souls of men, and in the struggle to obtain relief and still the clamors of remorse and fear. They had the same origin with the Tough shirts, the painful penances, and abject humiliations of some who bear the Christian name; and they had the same efficacy. Read Tennyson's "Simeon Stylites," where the subject is treated with the power of a master.

The atonements prescribed in the law were of a fundamentally different character, though appealing to the same susceptibilities of the human soul. It was not the case that all the sacrifices of the law were propitiatory. The burnt-offerings and other offerings appear to have been symbols of the offering up of one's self to God, as I think Hengstenberg has correctly explained them. But the sacrifices on the great day of atonement, and the sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, were propitiatory. They had a relation to sin and its forgiveness, and are said to make atonement for the soul; and this atonement was a condition of forgiveness in the sense in which forgiveness was dispensed under the law. Was the idea ever expressed in the Mosaic code, or anywhere in the Bible, that the animal slain was judicially substituted for the sinner, and punished by death instead of him? Or is it said that the animal typifies a future victim who was to be punished for him? I think no such language is found. The natural import of the sin-offering seems to be that the death of the victim symbolizes the death which the sinner deserves to suffer--that in the offering he acknowledges this, while he casts himself on the mercy of God for pardon, according to God's own appointment. In like manner, the ablutions symbolize the cleansing of the soul by the grace of God--a

cleansing confessed in the ablutions to be needed. This seems to be the simple import of these rites. They do not imply that God's feelings or dispositions are altered by them, but only our relations to him, justifying him in treating us with a kindness which he could not use if we did not thus come to him. These rites were adapted to exert a wholesome influence on the observer himself, and on all, too, who witnessed his observance of them; and the effect was naturally much greater when all Israel, on the great day of atonement, joined in the atoning observances. No mere verbal confession of sin could have an equal effect, though the verbal confession had its place, and was also required.

The law not only did not require, but utterly prohibited human sacrifices; though the Israelites, from time to time, roused God's intensest indignation by falling into the horrid heathen practice. For animals no nobler use could be imagined than to serve the uses of the human soul, and to prepare the way for the grand atonement of the Son of God. These animal sacrifices did not, in the deepest sense, take away sin. It may be said that, in that sense, all the sin of the world remained unatoned till the work of Christ was finished--till he had by himself purged our sin. We are not yet prepared to enter upon this great theme. A few things remain to be said of atonements before Christ.

It may be interesting to refer to the passage, Num. xxxv., respecting the murderer. Here the representation seems to be that until the murderer is duly punished the whole land is held guilty of his crime, and cannot be released till his blood is shed by them; for on them rests the responsibility of protecting innocent blood, and of vindicating it when shed; and when a murder has occurred it is assumed that the proper state of feeling with respect to murder had not been present in the land. "Blood defileth the land [makes it profane before God]; and for the land atonement is not made except in the blood of him that murderously shed blood" (vs. 33). The technical word for atonement is used, which our translation here and elsewhere obscures. In this case, atonement is not effected by the blood of the murderer as a sacrificial victim, but by the righteous conduct of the authorities and people in slaying him, and thus endeavoring to make murder odious. All is done by divine command. In a similar manner, when a person was found slain by an unknown homicide the nearest town was held responsible till in a solemn manner they had gone through rites of

atonement appointed by God, and God was himself entreated to atone for his people; and then it was declared that atonement had been made. The translators here again fail to use the technical word. It is obvious what a spirit of vigilance in guarding human life this institution is adapted to promote. Till it was duly honored, the sunshine of divine beneficence could not be enjoyed in full by the town.

When in Micah the proposed heathen atonements are rejected, the Lord tells what he will accept, namely, justice, mercy, and humble walking with God. This seems to mean that the chief atonement or condition of accepting one who has sinned is a return to right doing. But this right doing must include the observance of the atoning rites appointed by the Lord. Indeed, the moral influence on others of a sin-offering must have depended much upon a belief in the sincere repentance of the offerer.

In Prov. xvi. 6 it is said: "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged." Strictly, it should be rendered, "iniquity is atoned." "The departure from evil" of the remainder of the verse is not departure from sin, but from evil as punishment. The whole seems to mean, Mercy and truth obtain atonement for us, and the fear of the Lord escape from punishment. The two parts of the verse form a parallelism Mercy and truth and the fear of the Lord conspicuously in a man may be the occasion of grace and salvation to others, as well as to the subject.

In Numbers xxv. we have a remarkable example of an atonement expressly declared by the Lord himself to be effected by the zealous righteousness of Phineas. Israel had fallen into foul idolatry and the vile lewdness connected with it. God had commanded that the heads of Israel should be hanged up before him, and Moses had issued the order that each still faithful Israelite should slay his men who were joined to Baal-Peor. A plague had gone forth which slew twenty-four thousand men. While Moses and the congregation of Israel were weeping before the door of the tabernacle, Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, in the sight of Moses and all Israel, took Cozbi, a Midianitish princess, and went with her to his tent. Then Phineas, grandson of Aaron, indignant at this impudent abomination, seized a javelin, followed into the tent, and thrust them both through, killing them on the spot, in accordance with God's commands. Then the plague was stayed; and the Lord said to Moses

"Phineas has turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, in being jealous with my jealousy among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, I give unto him my covenant of peace; and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel." I have changed the translation to make it a little more literal, and to harmonize its parts.

This is to me one of the most instructive passages in the Old Testament. It seems plain that the atonement here made was not made by means of a slain animal, but by the manifestation of whole-hearted interest in the honor of God and the salvation of Israel. In thus making an atonement, Phineas acted as a true priest of the Lord, and the reward was fitly the establishment of the priesthood in his family. It was an atonement, because a holy moral influence went forth from it, turning Israel from foul idolatry to the sole service of Jehovah. On account of it, therefore, God could fitly turn from the fierceness of his consuming wrath, and grant Israel a space for repentance, and finally blot out the sin confessed and forsaken through the influence of the manifestation Phineas had made. This atonement would give a better efficacy to the atoning rites in established use.

It cannot be reasonably supposed that the case of Phineas stands absolutely, isolated, and that the devoted jealousy for God's honor and Israel's good of other distinguished saints, who have stood in the breach when God's cause was in most danger, had no similar atoning efficacy. It was often the case that for their sake the church was spared, and through them often restored from threatened ruin. Some of them hazarded, others laid down, their lives, and the zeal of the Lord's cause ate them up. Their testimony in word and deed for God and for his law were always ready, and both boldly and lovingly given. Hence many of these holy men have been considered and called by the church types of Christ, imperfectly yet really foreshadowing him and his work in various relations. Atonement as effected through them was very different, in the manner of it, from atonement made by the blood of animals, yet had the same general aim and result, to bring Israel into such a moral state, and such a relation to God, that he could properly show mercy, forgive, and bless; that no mistake would be left in the minds of his rational creatures

with respect to his hatred of sin and love of holiness. But Phineas would not have increased the efficacy of his atonement if he had surrendered himself to his father or grandfather to be slain on an altar, that his blood, in the manner of an animal's blood, might be sprinkled for the people. Such things were done among the heathen, but God had forbidden them most solemnly, and expressed his horror of them. They never could have produced a beneficent effect. But if Phineas, in his devoted effort to vindicate the claims of Jehovah to be the God of Israel, and to annihilate the foul worship of Baal-Peor, had lost his life, that might have added to the effect of his holy zeal.

The object and aim of the God who had created man in his own image, and whose heart was grieved to see his so richly-endowed creature fallen and lost, was to recover him from his ruin, and to reinstate him in his full favor. This was the end of all his operations in all stages of the world's history. And in a comprehensive view the whole series of providential and moral dispensations, of judgments and mercies, of trials without revealed law and with revealed law, the whole array of rites and institutions, of punishments and atonements, was necessary. But man was not restored till the gracious Father had done something higher and better for him than he had yet done; nor even then, until his last and most perfect system of operations had worked in the world for many generations. All along multitudes would be saved; but the world, ruled by the original arch-enemy, would show itself a mighty antagonistic force, long resisting, with apparent success, the power of the great Redeemer. All, however, would result in a most glorious triumph of redemption, and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of God and his Christ.

In all that God ever did by men for the behoof of their fellow-men, whether in the way of physical force or moral influence, he did it through his Spirit, guiding, actuating, and empowering them. In large measure the Spirit was in them, and presided over their speech and actions, and especially qualified them to provide that wonderful collection of divine inspirations, the Old Testament.

But when the fullness of time had come, prepared by all the past, the Word that was in the beginning with God, and was God, through whom all things that exist came into existence, in whom is the life that is the

light of men, became flesh and sojourned among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten one from the father), full, of grace and truth. For the law was given through Moses; the grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, the Word, and the immeasurable abundance of the Spirit. In all the holy patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings, and mighty, men, God dwelt in measure; in Christ, in absolute fullness, so that, it was absurd for any one who knew him to ask to see, the Father. He that had seen him had seen the Father. His words are the words of God; his works the works of God. Perfect infallibility characterizes every manifestation. He was infallible in the knowledge and utterance of the truth. The law he perfectly understood in all its breadth and spirituality. Here men, the best, the highest of them, might be partially ignorant of the law as to its spirit or application, but he could not be. His spirit and life were a perpetual outflow of holy obedience, an absolute, matter-of-fact commentary on the law. He is God with us, in and with humanity, a real and true brother of the race, full of all human sympathies; while he is perpetually in the Father and the Father in him in an ineffable closeness of interfusion.

Being such in his person, he was qualified as no one else ever had been, or ever could be, to open up to our souls an spiritual reality and truth. There is a dark haze drawn over man's interior eye by sin with respect to the glory of the divine law, the guilt of sin, the value of the good of rational beings, the sacredness of the relations man sustains to God and his throne. It is his mission to be the light of the world, to chase away the darkness, to send down into the depths of the soul the true illumination. For this end was he born, and for this came he into the world, that he should bear witness unto the truth. He is the faithful and true witness, bearing witness to the truth as no other could. He bore witness to the precepts of the law, showing their breadth and spirituality, as it had never been shown before. He testified of the world that its deeds were evil as no mere human prophet ever did. He tore the veil from sanctimonious hypocrisy. His teachings have confessedly spread through the world a blaze of light with regard to moral truth, compared with which all that was seen before was but as twilight to noonday. In this way he magnified the law and made it honorable, exhibited the glory of the precept and showed how worthy it is to be the rule for the heart and life of all God's moral

creatures. He magnified also the penalty, showed up the ill-desert of all sin, whether it stained the heart or the life. His instructions were wonderfully illustrated by all the manifestations of his life. That was the love commanded by the law perfectly embodied, and blazing in the eyes of mankind as the sun of righteousness. Till Christ acted in the world man hardly knew what the word love meant; but he has to millions of hearts effectually interpreted it, and yet has made them feel that they did not know the meaning as he did. All his actions, whether divine or human, or both, showed it forth transcendently. Perpetually there streamed forth from him love to poor, ignorant, sinful, lost men, love for the most lost; tender interest in all their interests; heartful compassion for all the woes they suffered or feared. And never did this world's sinners so see in any other presence how guilty they were, how unworthy of favor or blessing, yet were they emboldened by divine benignity to ask what they needed; and it was only there that any such grateful love was felt.

It was not towards man only that our Lord manifested love, but supremely to his Heavenly Father; showing the most perfect regard for his will, even when it called him to die the most revolting death. While no one else set the value on human good that he did, by word, by deed, by suffering, yet he was infinitely removed in his whole career from the mere humanitarianism that ignores God while it professes to devote itself to man. Every manifestation he made falls in with and echoes the words that he calls the great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." In life and in death he magnified this law and made it honorable, with a devotion no one had ever so gloriously shown before. Thus he condemned godlessness, and gibbeted it on his cross.

No one with my spiritual eyesight can fail to see in Jesus a deep, solemn earnestness of devotion to God's glory and man's good, transcending all ever beheld in any other life. It is no fanatical or enthusiastic devotion but as calm and rational as it is earnest and intense. And had he only lived such a life, and we possessed the true and fit record of it, it would have been a priceless treasure to the race. But his great mission of magnifying the law and making it honorable, and thus laying the foundations for man's salvation and his Father's highest glory on earth, was to have a most tragic close, one which was to make the cross the highest symbol of holy love and redemptive power which mankind or the universe ever

possessed. He was to seal his testimony, that of his whole career, with his blood. That was the appointment of his Father, and it was his will that his Father's will should be done. And we can, with our child eyes, see the wisdom. For his death intensifies infinitely the apparent earnestness and whole-hearted lovingness of his entire manifestation. It is here that love shines in full-sanctimonious blaze. Here it shines on the icy hearts of sinners with dissolving power. In the light of this love how odious does sin appear, how worthy of all condemnation. Here is the loveliest, most fragrant beauty of holiness; and in its pure light how ugly and hateful are sin and the sinner.

In its contact and connection with the Son of God sin had the greatest opportunity that it ever had to exhibit its nature and malignity. How blind it was to the most resplendent light that had ever irradiated earth, or even heaven. When sinful men not only rejected, but persecuted, reviled, and, finally, with infuriated rage, murdered the Son of God, sin manifested its true character and horrible baseness. And thus sin wrote, as it were, in letters of blood, its own condemnation and the rectitude of the law which denounces it. It would have been wonderful if at such a spectacle there had not been darkness over all the earth, and if there had not been such a shaking as rent the rocks. It seems as if on this little spot outside of Jerusalem, at Golgotha, the place of malefactors' skulls, there occurred the most marvelous exhibition the universe ever witnessed. Holy love and sin here met, and spontaneously manifested their genius and power. Holy love could not act itself out in its simplicity without manifesting its own exceeding beauty and loveliness, and, in contrast, the ugliness and hatefulness of sin. And sin could not here act itself out without showing its detestable character and worthiness of intensest condemnation.

In every possible rational point of view there goes forth from the whole character and career, and especially from the cross of the Son of God, where the manifestation of his holy love culminates, the mightiest moral influence, not only to rescue sinful men from sin, but to clarify and exalt the moral ideas and moral life of the whole universe. Christ is therefore set forth as a propitiation, or propitiator, in his blood. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The facts of his history are great public facts, published for their natural influence to the whole universe, but especially to his human brethren. He bore all his sufferings, all the

horrors of his death, primarily for them. He bore them that the eternal weight of God's wrath might not abide on his brethren. Therefore they are vicarious sufferings, but not at all in the sense that they are the literal punishment for their sins. But if his love wins our faith and transforms us, then we may be legitimately pardoned. For the moral influence of his suffering love is of far more efficacy to deter all God's moral creatures from sin, to magnify the law and make it honorable in their hearts, than the deserved punishment of countless millions of sinners could be. But still pardon can only reach the penitent. For, as our Lord himself asked on his way to the cross, "If these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The dry tree, the persistent sinner, fit for fuel, can get no legitimate hope from the cross; it rather bids him despair. "He that believeth not is condemned already"--has his certain condemnation emblazoned in his black unbelief--"because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

According to the view of Christ's atonement here presented, there is a closer analogy between the atonement made by Phineas and that by Christ, than between the atonements made by the blood of brute animals and the atonement made by our Lord. But there is an analogy belonging to all atonements; and the blood which always accompanied the legal sacrifices occasioned the frequent allusions to them, as also their being a regular institution of Moses, still in use when the apostles wrote.

When Paul says that "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin," the reference is to our Lord's being delivered up by God's counsel to be treated by men as the vilest malefactor. There is no allusion here to the sin-offerings. The original word here rendered sin is by some thought to mean in this place sin-offering; but this translation, while it rejects the ordinary meaning of the word, nullifies the antithesis of the apostle. Paul says, in sense, God delivered up Christ to be treated as if he were sin, that we might be treated as if we were righteousness. In a similar way we must interpret Gal. iii. 13: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Here Paul alludes to a saying in the Old Testament, that an executed criminal is deemed accursed of God. The manner of such a criminal's death was the manner of the death of the Saviour, as Isaiah predicted it would be. And this was indeed an awful humiliation for

the Son of God to endure. But to suppose that he was accursed of God, or regarded otherwise than with the highest complacency, is simply monstrous. The apostle does not say having been made the curse of the law for us, but simply a curse, that is, a person hanged on a tree like a malefactor.

If the Jews before the time of Christ had understood the language as many now take it, they must have supposed that the Messiah was to be made an awful exception to the law against human sacrifices; and that he was to be slain, as brute animals were, on an altar, as an atonement for sin. But I am not aware that any ancient Jewish interpreter ever had this idea; and it was certainly alien to all the ideas of our Lord's earthly time. The disciples of John the baptizer, when he spake of Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, never thought of such a thing as his being slain for sin in the manner of an animal. And no such thing appears in the historic record. What a different record it would be if the Jewish high-priest had been commanded to slay him on the altar of sacrifice, and he had actually done so. Or if Jesus himself, our great High-priest, had built an altar, and on that, in the manner of Racine's Eriphyle in his Iphigenic, had slain himself, or had laid himself on the altar, and had there awaited a thunder-bolt from his Father's hand, and the thunder-bolt had pierced the heart of God's Son, would such a transaction have been a fit one to be done in this universe of God? I feel sure that no Christian can think, it would be fit, or that it is possible to imagine a scene like that to be presented. Nor can any one believe that the effect of such a transaction would be wholesome in heaven, earth, or hell. The conception, or a similar one, it seems, did arise in heathen minds; but Christians are all glad of the abhorrence expressed for the entire thing in the sacred records. We feel no such horror when irrational animals are so employed; but we should experience a revolting if the innocent creatures were tortured.

The obedience of our Lord unto death, even the death of the cross, was no vicarious obedience to the law, and endurance of its penalty to be imputed to the elect; but was the most effectual condemnation of sin and glorification of holiness ever exhibited in this or any other world. All along it was rendered in contrast with the most awful display of wickedness ever made; which, in its murderous culmination, brought out in the

boldest relief the nature of sin. Christ, therefore, in this obedience did that which was more fit to be an atonement for all worlds, reconciling holy angels and sinful men to God, than any other conceivable provision that God could make, because it introduces into the universe among the moral creatures of God the highest possible redeeming moral influence. In its presence how ill-deserving every believing sinner must feel; while he, at the same time, feels, too, that through this he may be fitly forgiven, his merited punishment being an infinitesimal, or mere zero, compared with the condemnation which the cross visits upon his sin. But, as has been said above, the saving power can reach only the believer. To the unbeliever the holy sufferer says, "If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

These sufferings of Christ, while they are not punishment, are, to all who are saved, in the highest sense vicarious. They more than answer the purpose of the redeemed sinner's punishment, but they do answer that purpose. The end of his sufferings is not, could not be, mere retributive justice, but the promotion, among the moral creatures of God, of obedience to the law of love more directly than any punishment possibly could do it. The Saviour's obedience unto the death of the cross promotes this obedience, not only among men, but in all worlds. The believing sinner's pardon, instead of interfering with this great end, is itself an exemplification of the love which the law commands. For mercy, when it can be fitly exorcised, is itself a sweet demand of the holy law.

Though our Lord is not a victim, laid by divine command on a literal altar of sacrifice, much less a formal substitute executed under law in place of the actual criminals, no sinner can, if he beholds him on the cross, with a believing heart, help saying, it is I that deserve death for my sin, a death more dreadful than that which my Redeemer suffers. It is natural, therefore, for him to sing,

"My faith would lay her hand

On that dear head of thine;

While like a penitent I stand,

And there confess my sin."

The entire holy universe might fitly sympathize with the scene, and rejoice to see the curse removed.

One of the solemn and awful ways by which God has guarded against the abuse of the gift of his Son is, appointing him to be the Judge of the world; and at the great day he will so proceed as to show that he exercises no weak and, demoralizing pity for incorrigible rebels. "The Lord Jesus," Paul says, "will be revealed from heaven with his mighty, angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe . . . at that day." Then will be seen the wrath of the Lamb, and blood, not his own, will sprinkle his garments and stain all his raiment, when he treads the wine-press alone, needing no help from his people, treading his enemies and theirs in his anger, and trampling them in his fury. But then believers lift up their heads, for the time of consummated redemption is come.

All the allusions of the Bible to atonement and sacrifice, and all the usual language of evangelical preaching and song fall in with this view of the atonement of Christ. And especially does it fit into the language which the Christian naturally uses with respect to his own bearing of the cross and being crucified with his Lord, filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the church. None of this language detracts from the soleness of the work of Christ, as this is the origin or fountain of all the spiritual manifestations of his people.

I have already spoken of the atonement of the Son of God as reaching back through all past ages. That seems the import of the remarkable language of the apostle Paul in Rom. iii. 25, imperfectly translated in our English Bible, "Whom God set forth as a propitiation, through faith, in his blood; unto a showing of his righteousness, on account of a pretermission of sins formerly committed during the forbearance of God, with a showing of his righteousness at the present time, unto his being righteous and justifying him that is of faith." There can be no sinner who remembers the mercy of God shown him in any age of the world, whose

heart is not utterly hardened, that will not learn in the Saviour's life and death a deeper lesson respecting his sin, and find mightier motives there for holiness, than any other manifestations from God afford. It is according to the same principle that the apostle represents that the heavenly beings are themselves reconciled to God by Christ; which can mean nothing else than their effectually receiving higher lessons. in moral excellence than they ever before knew.

Inflicted punishment is, of course, always a condemnation, of sin, and less directly a commendation of righteousness and any imaginable atonement must have its moral power in the condemnation of the former and commendation of the latter. Righteous conduct is several times spoken of as condemning sin. Thus Noah, by his faith, manifested in building the ark, "condemned the world." The repentance of the Ninevites condemned the impenitence of our Lord's contemporaries; and so did the respect which the Queen of Sheba showed to the wisdom of Solomon. It is too obvious to need insistence that this is an effect of righteous conduct, and the condemnation and commendation are the more emphatic the further the zealous adherence to righteousness is carried. The effect is naturally reformatory; and in proportion to this influence mercy to the reformed becomes safe and salutary, since the influence is not confined to the reformed, but extends through the whole moral community. As in the case of Phineas and Moses, the influence is atoning. Nothing can be plainer than the condemnatory and commendatory power of our Lord's character and actions. It is plainly transcendently the greatest power for condemnation and commendation the moral world has ever known. "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." When Christ, as the God-man, and, as such, the highest witness, had by word and deed, pushed his practical testimony (the testimony at the appropriate epoch, I Tim. ii. 6) in the face of all human enmity, in the face of the cross, this constituted the highest conceivable atonement. Death, inflicted by, God's command, on a literal altar, could not have enhanced the beneficent influence but must have unutterably marred it. All the theories that so teach do mar it; but, thank God, it is too mighty to be destroyed by worlds of false philosophy and

false interpretation. It remains, amid all perversions that do not set aside the dignity of Christ's divine-human person and the facts of his life and death, the highest moral influence in the universe.

I have quoted several scriptures in which our Lord's, suffering obedience to death is spoken of as the chief constituent of the atonement; but I wish specially to signalize Hebrews x. 5-10, because this epistle is thought most plainly to exhibit the common notion of vicarious punishment. Here the writer quotes a passage from the fortieth Psalm, in which the sacrifices of the law as insufficient atonements are apparently contrasted with Christ's cordial obedience to his Father's will as the all-sufficient atonement. The offering of the body of Christ is spoken of, not as indicating that he is laid on an altar, and slain like an animal victim, but as showing that he, as God's saints always do in an inferior degree, laid himself out in death--bringing sacrifice for the ends for which he lived and died. The "body" of our Lord is here the organ of obedience provided as such by God. The Hebrew literally translated is "ears hast thou dug out for me," that is, fashioned for me, ready to listen to all thy commands. The rendering of the Septuagint can be made to agree in sense with this only by making "body" mean a ready organ of obedience. In the psalm no mention is made of death endured, but the mode of obedience specified is declaring God's truth in the great congregation, as the faithful and true witness for God. This was what brought on his death, in which he died as the highest witness for God and his holy law. So his atoning work was analogous to that of Moses and Phineas, though both on account of the superiority of the truth be declared, the dignity of his person, and the greatness of his sufferings, infinitely more significant and impressive.

It is a most fit and glorious work of the Spirit of God to bring to bear upon the souls of men the life and death of the Son, the only-begotten, to take of the things of Christ and show them to men. The blindness and stupidity which sin produces in human souls renders this work of the Spirit absolutely essential. Thus the gospel, the good news respecting this glorious Saviour, must be proclaimed with the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, with demonstration of the Spirit and power. To perfect men in the knowledge of Christ, and to educate them to be his younger brethren in the kingdom, the Spirit takes up his permanent abode in believers. And this indwelling of the Spirit belongs to the heavenly as well

as to the earthly state. What the Scriptures say of the present glory and reign of our Lord, of his coming to judge the world, and of his receiving believers to himself to enjoy him forever, does not belong to the atonement which was finished in his earthly sojourn. But these truths constitute a part of the gospel, and have an influence in promoting faith and practical holiness. The Spirit, therefore, takes these things as part of the things of Christ, and shows them to our souls. They serve to awe sinners, and cheer the saints of God; they have always been milch dwelt on by faithful ministers of the gospel, and always will be.

It may assist in the comprehension of the views here presented, to sum up more briefly what has been said in the preceding pages.

1. One of the most important provisions of the ancient time was what are called atonements. They were of different forms, but all united in being designed to promote repentance and obedience, and to create a public influence against sin which would render forgiveness safe and wholesome.

(1) There were the so-called sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, and the offerings of the great day of atonement, consisting mainly of the solemn slaying of clean animals, with confession of sin, intended to symbolize and set forth the ill-desert of the sinner who was to be forgiven. The anger of God of course ceases when the sinner repents; but the atonement, while it wholesomely affects the mind of the penitent believer, puts God publicly into a position in which he can properly pardon.

(2) There were atonements effected by the conspicuous zeal and devotion of eminent saints of God, in which their conduct sent forth a healthful moral influence to bring their brethren to repentance, and made it safe for God to forgive them when penitent, and even to exercise forbearance towards them before repentance. The most signalized case of this kind is that of Phineas, who is expressly, said by his jealousy for God to have made atonement for Israel. Moses is similarly said to have made an atonement for Israel.

(3) Human sacrifices, offered frequently by the heathen, were never tolerated by God, but most strictly forbidden; and there is no heathen practice mentioned with more horror by the prophets of the Lord. It was

impossible that they ever should have sent forth a healthful moral influence, even though offered under the lashings of conscience for the sins of the soul.

2. In the fullness of time, that is, when the world had had all the necessary previous experience, and had been carried through all the needful preparatory training, the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, became flesh, and sojourned among us; and thus there was on earth literally, an Immanuel, a true incarnation of God himself. The incarnation alone was a most wonderful expression of divine interest in the lost race of mankind; but the history of the career of the Redeemer--for it was to redeem he came--makes it the most stupendous marvel that the human heart can contemplate. His chief object here below was to make such an atonement for sin as to save from sin and death all that could by any possible atonement be saved, his atonement being the highest and most efficacious possible to the infinite goodness, wisdom, and power of God.

The atonement made by Christ consisted in the creation of the greatest beneficent moral influence that could be sent forth into the universe. To create this he must, in a transcendent degree and manner, magnify the law and make it honorable, and thus lift it up on high from the dishonored, prostrate, and trampled situation to which in this world sin had brought it down. He was to rescue the honor of God, and make him to man God and the Heavenly Father. He was to prepare the deliverance of man from debasing selfishness, and from bondage to sensual and passional gratification. This he was to do by means of the various wonders he did and suffered, manifesting all the perfections, natural and moral, of divinity, and as well all the perfections of an absolutely innocent and holy humanity. To his Heavenly Father in his law of love he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All he said, all he did, all he suffered, was the most awful condemnation sin ever received, or could receive; for he placed the resplendent whiteness of heaven's highest holiness alongside of the dark abomination which had befouled and laid waste the fair creation of God, and threatened to turn it into a hell. This abomination raged shamelessly around his cross, where his wondrous testimony for God and divine love, and against all sin, had its most glorious culmination; a testimony that would, in spite of all the rage and cunning of

Satan, take effect in millions of human hearts, subdue the world, and extend its influence even to the angels of God. The cross could not but show that all sin deserves a worse death than was suffered there in behalf of the sinner; could not but show, too, the certain doom of him who tramples under his profane feet the sacred blood, and refuses to yield his heart to its influence. This great showing up of sin by the obedience of Christ unto the death of the cross, renders unnecessary the showing up of the penitent's ill-desert by his personal punishment. That becomes, not undeserved, but inappropriate in the presence of the great Sufferer, on whose sacred head he lays his hand and confesses his sins.

3. The manner of the atonement of the Son of God is not the same with that of the sin-offerings of the Mosaic law. That was appropriate for animals, but not for any rational being, much less for the Son of God. Sacrificing him on God's part in that way, would have horrified the whole rational creation, and could not have been of beneficent influence. But as Christ did die, his death glorifies the Father and saves the world.

4. The great moral function of the Divine Spirit is to take the things of the Saviour and to show them to mankind. This work is essential; for left to themselves sinners would fail of any effectual knowledge of what our Lord has done and suffered for them. The gospel must be preached with demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

5. A necessary part of the gospel follows the story of the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, the reign at God's right hand, the constant working of Christ with his church, the second advent, the resurrection at his call of all the dead, the last judgment, the relations of Christ to his people in the post-resurrection state. All these things shed light on the atonement, illustrate its importance and eternal influence.

6. No character that ever shone in our world has exerted the actual influence against sin and in favor of virtue that has flowed from Jesus Christ. This is nearly the universal testimony of the best writers who have expatiated on the characters of history. By general confession he only has realized the ideal of moral excellence. Rousseau, in his eloquent way, merely echoed the general voice when, in his *Emile*, he wrote, "If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ lived and died like a God." The very ideas of mankind respecting right and wrong have

been wonderfully changed, clarified, and glorified through him, by his deeds as well as words. Even those who have denied his divinity have talked of him, of his transcendent character, as it is fit to talk only of a divine person; not only such men as Dr. Channing, but even such as Renan, and, recently, John Stuart Mill, who went so far as to think that Jesus might have an unique mission in the world. How sunlight plain it is that if man is to be brought to true virtue, and realize the law of his moral reason, Christ is to be the influence to effect it: he is to be the Atonement, the Reconciler. He is the one who, as Gabriel says to Daniel, is "to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

THE END.